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SMITHSONIAN CHANNEL™ PREMIERES

“D-DAY - THE TRUE STORY OF OMAHA BEACH”

ON 64TH ANNIVERSARY OF FAMED WWII MISSION

New Revelations in Hour-Long Documentary
Premiering Friday, June 6th at 9 pm ET/PT

(Washington DC, 6/2/08) - On the anniversary of the D-Day landings, a new television documentary shows just how close America came to losing one of the most important – and bloodiest – battles in its history.

History remembers D-Day, the greatest amphibious invasion ever attempted, as a great victory by U.S. forces, which were launched across the English Channel from the southern shore of England. **D-Day - The True Story of Omaha Beach** - an original documentary premiering on D-Day's 64th anniversary – evaluates evidence, old and new, to reveal that the pivotal battle at Omaha Beach was nearly a total disaster. Although an accidental breakdown in communications could have led to complete loss, the opportunity for victory was seized by a small group of men who were in the wrong place at the right time.

D-Day - The True Story of Omaha Beach, premiering Friday, June 6, 2008 at 9 pm ET/PT on Smithsonian Channel™, sheds new light on one of the iconic stories of World War II through emotional personal testimony by U.S. survivors of the battle, interviews with historians and military experts from both sides of the Atlantic, and ambitious reconstructions of battle scenes using state-of-the-art computer-generated imaging.

New evidence shown in the film reveals that the German defenses were far stronger than anticipated. The recent discovery of a captured German map and the re-emergence of an entire German bunker, hidden under the Normandy soil for over sixty years, bring new insights into how the strength of the German defenses had increased significantly between the planning for D-Day and the invasion itself.

As depicted in motion pictures like *Saving Private Ryan*, Germans – behind their bunkers along the shoreline – assaulted U.S. soldiers landing on the beach with a lethal combination of machine guns, hand grenades, and bombs. A massive U.S. air strike, conducted just hours earlier, intended to take out these German defenses, but failed to hit the targets. Americans landed on the beach believing that they would make it safely to the cliffs where German munitions were stored. Yet thousands of soldiers were killed as soon as they stepped onto the beach, or even into the water as they waded to shore. At the time, it was believed that, within hours, 2,000 men were cut down - “felled,” says one historian in the film, “like stalks of wheat by a sickle.” But the casualty figures were closer to 5,000.

The U.S. casualty toll at Omaha was so high that it has come to be known simply as “Bloody Omaha.” Still, the battle was won in spite of the heaviest of odds.

D-Day- The True Story of Omaha Beach is a co-production with BBC Timewatch. Produced and directed by James Hayes. Historical consultant: Simon Trew. Narrator: Bill Ratner. Executive Vice President of Programming and Production, Smithsonian Networks: David Royle.

ABOUT SMITHSONIAN NETWORKS

Smithsonian Networks (SN) is a joint venture between Showtime Networks Inc. and the Smithsonian Institution. It was formed to create new channels to showcase scientific, cultural and historical programming based largely upon the assets of the Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum complex. Smithsonian Channel features original documentaries, short-subject explorations and innovative and groundbreaking programs highlighting America's historical, cultural and scientific heritage. Visit Smithsonian Networks on the Internet at www.smithsonianchannel.com.

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